



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

**County of Orange Fire & EMS Firefighter/EMT Education
and Workforce Partnership Initiative**

The recruitment and retention of emergency medical technician and firefighter personnel has plagued every corner of the nation, including the commonwealth. The demands of the job take a mental, emotional, and physical toll on those who undertake the challenges of the professions. Tackling the issue is multifaceted. To start, the community and workforce pool must be educated on the professions and a qualified talent pool must be developed to help fill the workforce pipeline and ensure room for growth and turnover.

The County of Orange Fire and EMS Department (COFEMS) initiated a creative program to combat this challenge in conjunction with the Orange County Public School System (OCPS) and the community. As a first in the state, COFEMS and OCPS train the EMS and Firefighter leaders of tomorrow in active stations, *not classrooms*. As a result, industry interested participants completed the program which has translated into new hires and internships in our community. COFEMS's goal as a regional and state leader in modern technology, programs, and medical protocols is to train future leaders, tackle the recruiting hurdle faced across the nation, and establish an ongoing relationship with students that doesn't end at graduation. Seeing "beyond" the grade has not only empowered our youth, but allowed our first responders to engage in meaningful dialogue across the community.

COFEMS provides Firefighter 1 and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) courses to Orange County High School students with operations and administration staffers. The courses have been offered for six (6) years and just recently shifted focus to allow for students to participate in a real world setting away from the distractions of the school building. Firefighter 1 is offered in the autumn, and EMS in the spring semester. *No additional financial expenses are encumbered by COFEMS, and students are not charged fees. The materials, equipment, and training devices are used for ongoing training with personnel and captured in the operational*

training budget. The program is primarily presented by the COFEMS Training Officer, dedicated volunteers, and local professionals.

The courses are offered through the High School as a two (2) block class, and students are bused to the Berry Hill Fire Station to complete coursework. Class sizes start around twenty-five and approximately a dozen complete the challenging course. Students engage in adult level education in a real life setting hearing alarms, interacting with staff, and seeing “live action” responses to calls for service. Furthermore, students are treated like adult recruits, cell phones are prohibited, and professional conduct is required. After completing the coursework, students are eligible to sit for the Virginia Firefighter and Pro Board certifications which include a written test, live burn simulation, and skills assessment. Firefighter 1 students also must be affiliated with a volunteer fire department. As such, they learn how to work with volunteers, community members, donors, and professional staffers. Students are assigned a mentor with their volunteer fire company and work with their mentor throughout the program. After successful completion of this coursework and these certifications, students are eligible to volunteer with their local fire department where they can obtain their Firefighter II certification.

School year 2022-2023 introduced a new paid internship program for high ranking FF1 graduates who are enrolled in EMT classes. The internship is less than thirty hours a week and does not interfere with school. Interns experience the day-to-day life of a Firefighter/EMT as they work various shifts, including nights, are placed with a seasoned mentor, and respond to calls for service. The goal of the program is to provide a realistic perspective to prospects and to be honest and up-front about not only the technical challenges, but the mental, and emotional challenges the job can present.

The program has been successful. For example, last semester’s courses resulted in one (1) new hire for COFEMS, and several students signed up to return and continue their coursework. The certifications not only represent high school and college credits, but

empowered young professionals who are primed and ready to serve their community.

Graduates are eligible to become full-time COFEMS employees with a starting salary of \$54,000 +. In addition to receiving high school and college credits free of charge, if students pass their certifications they are recognized by Pro Board for the accredited classes. Pro Board certifications are recognized nationwide allowing for movement throughout the country.

COFEMS Chief, Nathan Mort noted, “The demand for fire and EMS personnel continues to grow each year on the volunteer side as well as the career side. With more and more opportunities opening and the need to fill these positions, programs such as these will help to close the needs gap within fire and EMS. We are very proud of the hard work that the students put into becoming certified, even if they decide not to continue in the field, they have learned that they can achieve more than they expected and have garnered problem-solving skills that will carry with them through life.”

Renee Honaker, Director of Secondary Instruction for Orange County Public Schools stated, “We are fortunate to have this partnership with Orange County Fire and Emergency Services. Providing students with these opportunities is only possible through collaboration between the schools and COFEMS. These courses help us achieve our goal of providing students a range of options that prepare them for the workforce or post-high school education/training.”

Recruitment challenges for professional firefighters and emergency medical technicians is felt across the country, particularly in rural areas. National groups such as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), U.S. Fire Administration, International Association of Fire Fighters, have tracked and depicted employment and volunteer trends for decades. Unless rural localities implement creative and deployable solutions, the unnerving trend downwards in recruitment and retention on both the volunteer and paid staffers will continue to present real safety concerns for our communities.

County of Orange Fire & EMS
Firefighter/EMT Education & Workforce Partnership Initiative

The County of Orange, Virginia is proud to be one of the first in the nation to provide real life education to our youth in partnership with our schools, the community, and our dedicated staffers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The County of Orange Fire and EMS Department (COFEMS) initiated a creative program to combat recruitment challenges in conjunction with the Orange County Public School System (OCPS) and the community. As a first in the state, COFEMS and OCPS train the EMS and Firefighter leaders of tomorrow in active stations, *not classrooms*. As a result, industry interested participants completed the program which has translated into new hires and internships in our community.

COFEMS provides Firefighter 1 and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) courses to Orange County High School students with operations and administration staffers. No additional financial expenses are encumbered by COFEMS, and students are not charged fees. The materials, equipment, and training devices are also used for ongoing training with personnel and captured in the operational training budget. The courses are offered through the High School as a two (2) block class, and students are bused to the Berry Hill Fire Station to complete coursework. Students engage in adult level education in a real life setting, hearing alarms, interacting with staff, and seeing “live action” responses to calls for service.

School year 2022-2023 introduced a new paid internship. Participants experience the day-to-day life of a Firefighter/EMT as they work various shifts, including nights, are placed with a seasoned mentor, and respond to calls for service. The goal of the program is to provide a realistic perspective of the profession to prospects and to be honest and up-front about not only the technical challenges, but the mental and emotional challenges the job can present.

Graduates are eligible to sit for the to become full-time COFEMS employees with a starting salary of \$54,000 +. In addition, if students pass their certifications they are recognized by Pro Board for the accredited classes and eligible for employment nationwide.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM:

The recruitment and retention of emergency medical technician and firefighter personnel has plagued every corner of the commonwealth. The demands of the job take a mental, emotional, and physical toll on those who undertake the challenges of the professions. Tackling the issue is multifaceted. To start, the community and workforce pool must be educated on the professions and a qualified talent pool must be developed to help fill the workforce pipeline and ensure room for growth and turnover.

The County of Orange Fire and EMS Department (COFEMS) initiated a creative program to combat this challenge in conjunction with the Orange County Public School System (OCPS) and the community. As a first in the state, COFEMS and OCPS train the EMS and Firefighter leaders of tomorrow in active stations, *not classrooms*, for Firefighter 1 and EMS courses. As a result, industry interested participants completed the program which has translated into new hires and internships in our community. COFEMS's goal as a regional and state leader in modern technology and the implementation of programs and medical protocols is to train future leaders, tackle the recruiting hurdle faced across the nation, and establish an ongoing relationship with students that doesn't end at graduation. Seeing "beyond" the grade has not only empowered our youth, but allowed our first responders to engage in a meaningful across the community.